Chapter 20: Miss Marianne Martindale

Miss Martindale takes it further than any other interviewee, in that she has created an entire world of female dominance; her own personal 'Shangri-La.' To me, she represents the 'ultimate' lifestyle mistress and, as such, a fitting point to draw this volume to a close.

Ever dreamed of another, better world where everyone knows there place in the scheme of things, old fashioned values still apply and traditional feminine principles are still rigorously applied; a place in this drab, gray man-made world where the goddess-magic still weaves wondrous spells? Then dream no longer! There is such a place and one doesn't need a magic carpet to get there. The enchanting all-female world of Aristasia lies not at the end of some fairy-tale rainbow. It's location is surprising earthbound, in fact. The suburban fringes of London Transports Central Line, to be exact!

From the outside, there is nothing about the Aristasian Embassy to distinguish it from any other house in a street of quiet, select homes. The more observant passer-by might notice that all the curtains are permanently drawn. But, apart from this petty quirk, one has no way of telling that one is standing at the borders of a very foreign country, and that the curtains represent the subtle battlements of a very well defended empire. There are, in all, five or six Aristasian households scattered around Britain. The embassy is the only one that may be visited by a male outsider, and then only by invitation. Miss Martindale, as ambassadress and spokeswoman, is the only Aristasian who will communicate with the outside world.

Ushered into the drawing room, one finds oneself leaving the present day behind and being transported back to a world of bygone charm and elegance. A world that resolutely refuses to acknowledge the march of time or the perceived social decay outside their domain, in what is derisively termed 'The Pit' in Aristasian parlance (yes, they have their own language, too). Aristasians ignore all events (even the calendar itself) beyond 1960. There is no television here or any other evidence that the past forty years ever happened. Music is strictly of the 78rpm record variety and the required 'current' reading comprises back numbers of 'Picture Post' and 'Country Life', delivered to themselves through the letter box, according to the day and month which matches the same date in their chosen era. That is, if the present date is Monday, May 6th, a year will be sought out from the past when that date fell on that particular day. Here the 1950's reign supreme. The 1920's and 30's are in favour, too, although the 1940's are frowned upon as the Second World War simply didn't happen in Aristasia!

Though fervently against so much that has come out of The Pit in the last four decades, Miss Martindale has no problem harnessing the 'magic' (as she puts it) of the modern world, such as the Internet, when she feels like it! However, even the 'new technology' of the 21st century she embraces in her own iconoclastic fashion. Whilst conducting this series of interviews she sent a fax to my office dated '5.22pm. Monday, July 31st, 1950'! Yet for those with sensitivity enough to see beyond what might easily be dismissed as just another example of quaint English eccentricity, there is something else at work here. Something strange, yet powerful and even magical.

Miss Martindale herself (first names are rarely permitted and an atmosphere of rarefied genteel formality is maintained at all times) dresses and acts completely in the Aristasian character she has created. Her clothes and make-up, right down to the pink Jezebel cigarettes and holder reflect the poise and demeanour of another, more genteel, era. Her voice and manner is authoritative, yet brimming with vitality and enthusiasm for the subject she so obviously adores and always, unfailingly, the quintessence of the femininity she so passionately promotes.

I think it's quite interesting how we began, because we started off as writers. We were a group of girls who always had discipline as a part of everyday life, because the conception was related to it. Right from the start we rejected the Pit and the late twentieth century, and looked back to traditional philosophical ideas. This meant we were hierarchical, so there were always mistresses and schoolmistresses and there were always girls who were servants and schoolgirls. But we didn't begin writing about that. We began writing about other things and then went on to write about what was our everyday reality for commercial reasons. But we wouldn't have anything

other than all girls and we would only reflect what was our true reality; which was not about domination but about having genuine authority and looking after those below you in a genuine hierarchy. In those days, we didn't know what we wrote would sell, because we refused to be deliberately provocative or titillating. In fact, we had no interest whatsoever in addressing the market of dominant ladies and submissive men, even though it was so much bigger. I must say, we were pleasantly surprised to find there was a market for the quality of our literature; which can't be beaten in any field, I would think.

We were very serious about maintaining our integrity concerning what we're prepared to write about and how we're prepared to write it. That's why we would only write very high quality material. The first book, *The Female Disciplinary Manual*, was actually a collection of papers that circulated around different Aristasian households. They were collected together, edited and typewritten. Miss Snow's novel is a fictionalised version of our reality. The '*Manual*' is absolute fact, and everything in it has happened. For instance, describing what it's like to give a thousand lines. Someone, somewhere down the line has been subjected to the various punishments described.

Aristasia first came into being at Lady Margaret's College at Oxford University in the early 1970's. It was like a little colony. At the time I had no idea about corporal punishment. It was something that had never even crossed my mind. Very soon after I had joined someone saw that I had a 'schoolmistress' in me, so they just put me in charge of somebody else. I was told a little about it, but essentially I was just told to get on with it. I found that I was naturally strict, and that I liked looking after people in that way. About a year after that I was given the position of being mistress of a household, so I had the dual responsibility of taking care of education where it arises (which isn't everyday, because there are so many other things one has to do) and looking after any household I happened to be in.

The main motivation of everyone involved was disassociation from The Pit. But, as time went on, a small number of us who wanted to live completely privately, having found the maid who was going to be faithful or a companion, took themselves off. It fragmented after the Oxford years, or perhaps dispersed would be a better word. We ourselves went to Ireland with quite a few of the girls and were there for sometime. The 'Irish Period' occurred during the 1980's (or the third Decade of Darkness, according to Aristasian timescale) and found the hard-core Aristasians setting up residence in a mansion in County Donegal. Our numbers ranged from five to fourteen with myself as headmistress. Things went well in our newfound home, which we dubbed St. Brides, for about ten years. Then trouble loomed in the form of a maid who sued me, as headmistress, for actual bodily harm. Although every girl who joined the school accepted the certainty of punishment, and bearing in mind the girl in question had consented to the cane, she won the case and I was still found guilty of assault. In actual fact, I only disciplined her three times in eighteen months, and then only very faintly!

I'm also keen to correct the implication in some press reports that Aristasia is in any way a 'secret' organisation to which there is no admittance. We're always interested in being available to any girl who wants to escape from the dreariness of modern life. This house is the Embassy of Aristasia. If anyone comes here then they're entering another country. It's said at the beginning of another of our books, *The Feminine Regime*: 'Have you ever wanted to go through a wardrobe into Narnia or the looking glass in Alice?' And that's the absolute gospel truth! Because we distil and make so strongly manifest femininity and the feminine principle we really, truly, are not living in the same place as you! And when somebody comes here, her whole experience of herself completely changes.

I can give you an example. A girl came here recently dressed, as many girls in The Pit do, in a very masculine way. I felt, however, that she had a very feminine nature and a very soft side. She was very interested in us and wanted to put her heart into it and join in when she was here. She wanted to be 'good', if you like. She asked me: "Should I wear a skirt when I come?" And I said: "No, don't. You just live your life there. Come through the doorway into Aristasia and be feminine here and have the two completely separate". So she came and I dressed her up as a schoolgirl. She, and I, were both expecting her 'schoolgirl' to come out because, no matter what the physical age, a 'young' side to a girl's character invariably emerges. Incidentally, the girls you read about in the '*Manual*' and our other books may seem like schoolgirls, but they're all adult women feeling like 'schoolgirls' inside.

I took her to a special room that's set aside for this sort of transformation, where I put a uniform on her and a wig. And a character came through that was very fussy; very 'hoity-toity'. You see, what happens is a girl becomes something she could never be in The Pit; something she doesn't realise or perhaps doesn't even have any inclination toward in the outside world. After we gave the girl an Aristasian name (*note: in Aristasia 'masculine' names are exchanged for purely feminine ones. Thus, Jameson, or 'son of James' would be substituted with 'daughter of…'*) she said to me: "If I had to describe the sort of person I really hated I would have described that character". It wasn't that the character was feminine. It was the fact that here was a side of her personality she was denying. But more than that (and here it becomes very exciting) is that you get a whole sense of the character of the girl. Now I realised this girl was in the fifth year in our 'magical school', even though it was her

first real visit. I also sensed, because she came along at about the same time as another girl she knew, that the other girl had a 'prefect' inside her. I could tell by her authority. And I knew the feminine one, the conceited one, wouldn't have anything to do with the girls in her year. She liked to befriend the bigger girls in the sixth form. And I *knew* she had a pony at home and all that sort of thing!

So, you see, they come complete with a whole world! It's not just their appearance; not just the fact that they can look in the mirror and say 'ah!' because their face changes so much, it's that you know their whole history! You can then use that to make them come even stronger. Next time I know this girl is coming I'm going to take some of my own girls (they are passed around anyway) and I'm going to have the girls with a 'younger' personality, though they might all be the same age physically, dressed in gym slips and tunics. I'm going to have the prefects, and the girl who is a bit 'older', in skirts. I'll just let it come to life then! I'll be the schoolmistress, you know, teaching this and that. Then I'll go out of the room and leave the prefects in charge. In the school you turn a bit of a blind eye to what the prefects get up to. If the mistress is away and they want to give someone a smack for something, they do. There is that element of a little bit of bullying or pinching and so on, but it's all part of what is acceptable. Because each girl has a natural 'real life' persona, it doesn't *need* any play-acting! They just come to life on their own, and then we just see what happens. You simply enter into it and it unfolds. I don't even know what sort of schoolmistress is going to come, because *different* schoolmistresses come through me. I might go in as a young, glamorous schoolmistress or I might be a very strict schoolmistress who is nearer my physical age. I might go in as someone who is quite tolerant and kind and not terribly strict or I might appear as a terrifying harridan. That's all part of the magic!

It's very much a continual and on-going process of exploration. You create this wonderfully intense, magical thing between the different girls and, when they're out of uniform, then something completely different would happen. For instance, someone who perhaps was a maid in one situation might, in another situation, be something quite different. Though they do tend to be predominantly maids because it's in their nature to serve, even a maid can have an adolescent girl inside her who is on a peer level with other girls in that her personality is of a similar age. She might have a more powerful side which is a bit more grown-up (say, twenty or something like that) who can go to the nightclub we have created within Aristasia. We obviously don't go into The Pit. She might be allowed to be one of the girls at the club, a waitress or some such.

As well as the nightclub, we create restaurants, rock n' roll cafeterias…what else? Cinemas. In fact, we create a whole world of entertainment. We actually leave the house by one door and come in another into a room, which doesn't look the same as it did when it was just a drawing room or just a dining room. We'll change it around and it creates a very strong atmosphere. Though the schoolroom tends to stay as the schoolroom. The amount of time a girl stays here can vary between one or two evenings a week or a couple of days every few months, if they live a long way away. At times we have girls living with us, and at times we have girls 'almost' living with us, depending on peoples circumstances and so on. There's a lot of flexibility there as to what's appropriate for someone's life. Obviously, a lot of girls would have commitments such as earning a living which meant their time here was limited, but you just make sure that someone enters into it fully and is completely in Aristasia and being feminine while she's actually here.

I'm often asked about my possibly admitting transvestites into Aristasia, but I'm afraid that's very much forbidden. This is very much a thing for 'genuine' girls, as it were. That's a different thing altogether. I think the strength of that interest, or whatever it is you'd call it, is because of the femininity in a woman's dress. I feel it's like a reaction to recognising that femininity has almost entirely been pushed out of The Pit, and it creates a sort of longing for femininity, which is then transposed into the individual thinking that it's inside him. Sometimes I also feel it's just a reaction to the drab, dreary, masculine world that surrounds everybody in The Pit.

There is a deep spiritual level to Aristasian philosophy. Christianity is a rather masculine religion, I agree there. But, at the same time, I see the Earth Mother as a rather degenerate form of paganism, really. That's a rather late thing. We very much adhere to tradition and, fortunately, traditional principles exist in Plato and people like that where you can learn about ancient things. Incidentally, the '*Árist*' in Aristasia comes from Aristotle. But I wouldn't call us pagan, though it is very much connected to matriarchal things such as the hearth and the home, which is the centre of feminine power, if you like. These are the values that have been denigrated and denied both by men *and* by women in the closing years of the twentieth century. Everything now takes place in a public world, and there's simply no value in the private world; it's not seen as having any value whatsoever.

Part of what we're creating is drawing on the power and the beauty that can spring to life in the sanctuary of the home. The discipline is integral to it in ways that I probably don't even understand myself, such as the exercise of a genuine hierarchy and the instilling of obedience into those below you. I think of myself as serving a heavenly power and serving God, as well as serving everyone I rule. That's the difference when someone has genuine authority. This is a whole world, even though I may rule only one household within it. I'm looking after

everyone I have power over. I don't have any interest in personal power, and that's why I don't think of myself as a dominatrix. In fact, as will be revealed, Aristasians have no connection or interest in the 'conventional' world of fetishism at all, referring to its practitioners as 'Silly Monkeys'. Take the initials and you'll get the joke!

Here in Aristasia, I train a maid to lay the table almost as if it's a dance, and not just to lay everything in its set place through convention, but to sense the harmony. As a mistress, you try to be the *perfect* mistress; to fulfil an archetype, rather than a stereotype. It's taken me over twenty years to discover what would look from the outside like a dominating personality, because I was so determined that I wasn't going to rule simply from my own whims. I now have a number of personalities that actually enjoy the power and enjoy punishing, but that's after twenty years of being strict with people purely out of duty and not having a sense of power. It's only been given to me, as it were, when I have so completely subjugated myself to the idea of looking after and serving people below me. It's a state of being free, or as far as a human being can be free, of personal wilfulness, if you like. And I admit that I like 'enjoying' being strict, and not just doing it out of duty!

In a traditional hierarchy everyone serves other people, not just the servants. The servant serves in a personal bond because they have a character that needs that intimate personal service. Somebody who farms the land or carves chairs serves in a material way, while someone with authority serves by protecting and ruling. In a genuine traditional society, such as Hinduism, you have at the top people who are scholars and priests and priestesses who serve by that function. So, you see, a hierarchy is very, very interesting. And not a bit like the late twentieth century thinks of it!

Somebody looks at a person who has a lot of power and has girls doing things for her and so on, and it looks as if one is leading an easy life. But, as anyone who has responsibility knows, being in charge of people means that you don't have five minutes to yourself, except when you're unconscious asleep! When you're looking after people, you're actually at the beck and call of anyone who needs you, and you've always got responsibilities. You're never an individual when you've got an important function like that. You might have the odd moment when you feel like an individual, but you're on duty twenty-four hours a day, really. I feel this is a vocation, and that's true of other girls in Aristasia as well, whether they be maids or commanding maids. I have extra responsibilities because of taking in new girls and helping them to understand things. It's quite clear in one's experience of it and in one's intellectual background, that Aristasia really is a completely separate world and a completely separate country from The Pit. Anyone who visits Aristasia has to leave something behind and step into something else and you have to understand different things from what you're used to.

There are girls in Aristasia who are above me in the hierarchy, certainly. But they are in closed communities and not under constant supervision in the way anyone under me is. I will get seen and visited from time to time. However, if I've done something wrong, I won't be punished for it as me. I'd be punished as my 'schoolgirl' self. In that way one isn't denying one's own 'schoolgirl' persona by being a house mistress. For instance, when I see the girls this week, as I was describing to you, and we go out of school, we'll be going to an ice cream soda bar. I'll be going as a sixth-former, because I've got that sort of character in me. Obviously, I don't want to miss out on all the fun by going somewhere like that as a schoolmistress or as mistress of the house! That's one of the nice things about it, as I'll still be the eldest 'schoolgirl' and I'll still be in charge of everyone! But, if I've somehow failed in my duty or something like that, and it's seen as necessary to deal with me, then I'll be sat at a school desk myself. I've *never* given a punishment I haven't experienced!

Another part of what we're doing in Aristasia is giving girls a place in a hierarchy and a place in our hearts as well. Those things that are lost in The Pit; such as being able to trust and being able to love without feeling rejected. Anyone who enters deeply into Aristasia finds that they can trust it will be forever. If the girl decides, as has happened at various times, that she wants to go back to The Pit, then she does so and that's that. But if she doesn't, then she knows it will be for always, and that's an important contrast when everything is so impermanent and fragmented in The Pit.

This is partly created through love and affection, and the fact you've given so much time and so on. But it's also created through discipline and the bond that's created through trusting the person who's disciplining you. It creates a sort of magical connection. Nearly all the girls who come to us feel very strongly how drab everything is in The Pit. They discover in Aristasia a whole world that deals with everything from traditional philosophy to how you ought to do your eyes. It covers so much, it's difficult to know what to focus on in an interview. And it's all very fascinating. But, fundamentally, it is a hierarchy; it is about genuine discipline, not 'dominating'. Mainstream journalists do tend to get very interested in the picturesque side of what we're doing, so we do tend to end up as these funny little people doing something odd. And, really, we are doing so much, much more.

Another thing that doesn't often come across in articles about us is that we do encourage females (and females only) to visit. Any girl who feels she would benefit from what Aristasia has to offer is very welcome. A girl who

comes along for a chat will find us very approachable. Though, I should say, that not all girls who come here are suitable. Sometimes a girl will be so 'glued' into The Pit, and by that I mean so strongly attached to television values and attitudes and immortality and all the rest of it. In such a case, I would tell her that I didn't think she was quite ready. But if I sense something in her that could be brought to life, I'll invite her to come back. Say somebody came along from the 'Silly Monkey' club and said: "I like what you're doing, but for me discipline definitely has to be sexual". Then I'd tell them there's no point coming because, although our world is sensual, it's subtle, too. It's like the sort of atmosphere you get from our writing. It's intelligent, refined and very powerful, because it's controlled.

I don't think there's any point in pretending that administering and receiving discipline doesn't arouse certain feelings, but it depends what you do with them. One can indulge them and give rein to what I call the 'lower passions' and be 'fleshy' about it, or you can refine it. We are absolutely chaste in Aristasia. It's all girls, as you know, and there is a sort of subtle sensuality, but it is still chaste. Now that might sound boring, but it's actually very fulfilling. It reminds me what Oscar Wilde said about smoking. He said: "Smoking is the perfect type of the perfect pleasure". It's exquisite, but it leaves you unsatisfied. I think that's a very feminine mentality. The masculine mentality demands that you have to go to the end, to attain a certain goal. You have to make it explicit, you have to indulge 'fleshily', as it were. Whereas everything we do is raised to higher things. So you can get very intense atmospheres, but they don't fall into lower behaviour at all. It just makes more magic!

And, yes, I would say that ultimately it is very spiritual, because you have an inward submission to God. There have been times when I've really felt that. When I've prayed to do God's will (who I conceive in a feminine form) and I've prayed to submit to something and wanted Her will to be done, not my own, I've experienced intense ecstatic feelings just by relinquishing my will. And I think that, whether you administer or receive discipline or whether you do both (in a hierarchy you find people who do both, obviously), the true heart of discipline, the key to it, is the submission to a higher authority. It's this submission that gives the delightful feeling, shall we say. It's not the physical aspect of it at all, but the spiritual submission.

Physical discipline purifies, cleanses and encloses. It raises the soul higher. The sensuality you get from giving a punishment is because you're submitting yourself to something that knows better than you what's appropriate. There was once a girl who had been really, very naughty and I gave her six strokes harder than I've ever managed before. Something higher than me had decided it had to be a very severe punishment. I don't know if you're aware of this, but in Ancient Greece flagellation was practiced as a part of a young person's rite of passage.

In Aristasia we have hardly any contact with the outside world. Some of us do live what we call 'up-to-date', which we would deem not later than 1960's. For instance, I drive a Wolsey 1660 car, and one of the girls has an old Austin. They're very good and reliable. We'll go out in the car and we'll play dance band music, jazz and rock n' roll, and you're in your own world the whole time. You take your own world with you. Sometimes we only go out for provisions.

As far as music goes, as with everything else in Aristasia, I don't mean anything past 1960. Rock n' roll for us is the genuine 1950's music. Like 1920's and 1930's music, you can hear the innocence in it, unlike anything that has come after. Raucous, if you know what I mean. I'm very fond of rock n' roll, all the girls are. We have quite a wide musical world here. There are even a few things from that early 1960-61 period we listen to, like the Susan Maugham and Helen Shapiro kind of thing. They're just about acceptable from our point of view, but nothing after that!

The Beatles, as far as we're concerned, are absolutely beyond the pale! They were very, very significant in the corruption of things that brought about the Eclipse (*note: The utter collapse and destruction of all order, sanity and feminine values that began in the 1960's, according to Aristasian thinking*). They're very, what we'd call, 'sickly'. How can I explain it? Can you hear that rock n' roll is clean and pure as well as exciting? By the time we get to the Beatles, it's become something strange. I suppose you might call it a poisonous element. We view the group as fundamental to the Eclipse, and that's taken as gospel by every Aristasian. They heralded in what came afterward and, even though they seemed appealing, they were pretty well impregnated with something rather poisonous and sickly.

It's the same with jazz. In the actual 1920's, jazz was seen as something terrible. And it's not altogether untrue that, historically speaking, it led on to all those things that came next and got more and more degenerate. But we're approaching it with the philosophy that a road *out* of somewhere is also a road in! Obviously, we might try to deny The Pit as much as possible, but we are historically born into it. That's why one of our books is called *Children of the Void,* because everything we create is created from a void! So if you back away from a void to a music that's vibrant and exciting, you don't hear what people at the time heard (which was the degeneracy) you hear in it the innocence. Most of the core of Aristasians don't know anything about The Pit after the 1970's

and the second Decade of Darkness. They might know the name of the odd political figure that seeps through or something like that, but the core of us left The Pit completely, and really and truly don't know anything about it. One might hear the odd bit of music walking by a shop or one might know Margaret Thatcher existed, but it's very, very minimal.

We don't have any political allegiances here, obviously. And I wouldn't know much about the details, of course, because we don't read the newspapers or pay any attention to what goes on in The Pit. But one has obviously seen the occasional photograph, though not in the house, of course, maybe a shop or something, so we knew what she looked like. Yes, I thought of her as sort of a governess-type. I thought she made the most of her appearance, which so few women do in the late twentieth century. I liked her having this degree of femininity and superiority, but that's about as far as one would really bother about it. One can't agree with anybody, because we've created a world here whose underpinning is medieval and earlier. Well, not even medieval. It's matriarchal. But we're not trying to bring about a matriarchy, because that's something that happened, or even project anything into the future. It's our internal world, if you like. We're not even saying everything should be matriarchal.

We're trying to create a world of beauty and love and firmness; a world that's exciting and stimulating and intellectually sound to live in. And if one has any idea at all, then one thinks (well, I do, personally) that the only form of acceptable political organisation is the kind of small principalities ruled by queens and princesses that existed thousands of years ago. I don't know what will happen in the future, because that's in God's hands, not mine. I'm certainly not interested in any form of political organisation today because they are simply too remote from the fundamental principles.

I think that what's happened in recent years is that through greater public interest in fetishism (which, to me, incidentally, is just another manifestation of The Pit) most people are now aware of a need for discipline. In the past, men have tended to be more interested in it than girls. But through the fashion and publicity of the Silly Monkeys, more girls have begun to think about these things who probably wouldn't have done before. Generally, I tend to attract girls who haven't had anything to do with Silly Monkeys. The girl will simply feel a need to be disciplined. She might say: "I want a smack, but I don't really understand it and I feel a bit strange". They've never had one before, and never talked to anyone else about it. And many more of these kinds of girls are getting in touch with me in recent years than in times gone by. Also, I was very surprised when I did publicity for the *Female Disciplinary Manual* how seriously I was taken, even by the sort of feminist-type journalists that didn't like me. I was seen for what I was against a backdrop of people behaving in what to us in Aristasia is a very 'suburban' way!

THE END